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### Slavery, Louisiana, and Codification

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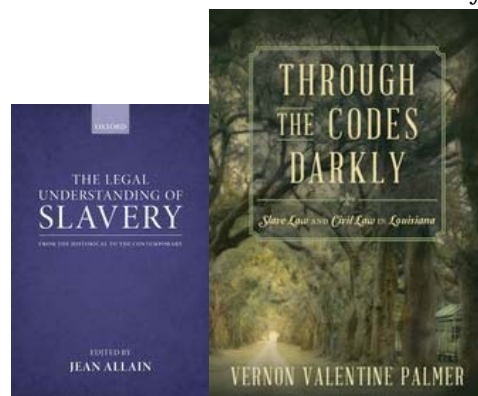
## Slavery, Louisiana, and Codification

Posted on 19/11/2012 by [John Cairns](#)

This blog has an obvious interest in both slavery and law and the law of Louisiana. Both of these topics come together with the publication of *Through the Codes Darkly: Slave Law and Civil Law in Louisiana*, Lawbook Exchange, Clark NJ, 2012, by Vernon Valentine Palmer of the Tulane Law School. This pulls together Palmer's research into slavery and Louisiana, though it is perhaps broader in implication and significance than that description and the title might suggest. It is an important work, reflecting on, for example, the customs that evolved around the practice of holding slaves, customs that made slavery more palatable for the enslaved, an important issue given the threat of slave insurrection – and in 1811 Louisiana had the largest ever slave insurrection in the U.S.A. (the subject of a recent popular history by Daniel Rasmussen – slaves of James Brown, one of redactors of the Code of 1808, were ringleaders).

Slavery is, of course, still with us in a variety of forms. Recent wars, the break-up of the old Soviet Empire, and other events have created the instability and social dislocation that makes individuals – particularly women and children – vulnerable to enslavement. This has made its proper definition a significant issue. Here one may note publication of the recent book edited by Jean Allain, *The Legal Understanding of Slavery* (Oxford, University Press, 2012). Through a historical and contemporary discussion (to which your blogger contributed a chapter) this seeks to assist in interpreting the provisions on slavery in international law. It contains a set of guidelines on how slavery should be understood and the relevant provisions interpreted.

It was the brutality of the Louisiana slave regime that led to the revolt of 1811; it is the brutality of modern slavery that means a work such as that edited by Allain is needed.



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